

PUTTING THE C.I.A. 'RIGHT'

Reagan's Plans For Intelligence

JEFF STEIN

An extraordinary reorganization of U.S. intelligence is in the works if Ronald Reagan is elected President next November. The Reagan blueprint was drawn up by a special intelligence subcommittee of the Republican National Committee in August 1979, but heretofore seems to have escaped detailed attention from the press.

The twelve-page plan, authored by a group of former Central Intelligence Agency officials and military men under the direction of Richard Allen, the Republican candidate's chief foreign policy adviser, appears designed to demote the role of the C.I.A. in strategic intelligence analysis in favor of the military, and contains a key provision creating a special, independent agency for "counter-intelligence and counter-terrorism."

"The need for a comprehensive intelligence charter," the policy paper concludes, "geared not only to present realities, but also to our future national security requirements, dictates that we go back to the drawing board and start anew."

Some of the Allen-Reagan proposals, such as the notion

of reducing Congressional oversight of the intelligence community to one joint House-Senate committee, parallel Carter Administration proposals. And the Republicans' contentions that there is "confusion and uncertainty about the reliability of the intelligence community's products" and that there is an "overall loss of public confidence, at all levels, in the intelligence community" seem reasonable. But other Reagan proposals reflect the stab-in-the-back mentality of the right wing that has gained momentum in the past two years, notably that the Church Committee findings and Carter-era efforts at reform were "drawn up by a small group of people who seem more bent on an old anti-C.I.A. crusade than in creating an effective intelligence community." Or as retired C.I.A. official Osborne Day, one of the eight members of Allen's intelligence team, told me with disgust in an interview: "Frank Church—when you talk to Frank Church, you might as well be talking directly to the K.G.B. And you can quote me on that."

Herewith the highlights of the Reagan intelligence-reform plan:

§ Domestic spying. The plans call for creation of joint C.I.A.-F.B.I. file-keeping on "counter-intelligence and counter-terrorism" in a special section to be created in the Justice Department or in some new independent agency. "Here," the policy paper proposes, "joint teams of officers from both the domestic and foreign intelligence services would lawfully look at the same data."

Jeff Stein is Washington editor of The Progressive.

§ Check on the C.I.A. Right-wingers have always been suspicious of "liberal bias" among C.I.A. analysts who count Russian missiles. To correct that, Allen's team proposed strengthening the role of the Defense Intelligence Agency as a source of "alternative analysis," as well as bringing back the "wise old men" of the Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board or a similar organization to further checkmate the C.I.A.

§ More covert action. "The clandestine services have been of inestimable value to our national security," it is contended. "They have performed some of the most important of C.I.A.'s unique functions, and they should be strengthened." To accomplish this, Reagan would create a combined information-collection and counterintelligence agency, to be known as the "Foreign Operations Service," which would be "wholly clandestine."

§ Mobilize the entire government for intelligence. The new Foreign Operations Service would have at its disposal every Federal agency, "required to furnish . . . full credentials, working assignments abroad for purposes of 'cover,' and full cooperation." Peace Corps please copy.

§ Weaken the Freedom of Information Act and the Privacy Acts. They have had "a definite adverse impact on how law enforcement and intelligence agencies operate, fulfill their responsibilities and protect their own security," the paper states. There has been "grotesque abuse," permitting individuals to stonewall investigators while tying up bureaucrats' valuable time answering information requests on how tax money is spent. The Reagan team proposes only that the acts be subject to "revision and tightening."

§ Immunity for corporations helping the intelligence

agencies. Say an I.B.M. executive in Latin America is kidnapped by a revolutionary group and charged with being a C.I.A. agent. Let us further assume that he had been volunteered by his boss for a C.I.A. mission. He is killed. His family finds out he was on an intelligence mission and sues. Under the Reagan plan, new laws will provide private companies immunity "in connection with any lawsuit directed against them for permitting intelligence officers to use their activities as 'cover.'" One might suppose this would obtain for breaking and entering on a "legitimate" national security mission as well.

§ Intelligence czar. The Reagan team would like to create the position of the President's "chief adviser for intelligence matters, who would serve at his [my emphasis] pleasure and should communicate the President's priorities to the intelligence community. He should present to the Congress the President's views of the community's needs," the paper adds, "and should be the community's sole [their emphasis] contact with the news media."

In short, it appears that on Reagan and Company's "drawing board" are a number of new wings and annexes to the present intelligence structure—not to mention some secret passageways, to which only the master of the house has the key. Of course, Reagan will need the cooperation of Congress for this ambitious plan. But then the Reagan team wouldn't stake their reorganization plan on the whims of the present Congressional committee systems. They want to create the special joint intelligence committee first. From there, it will all be downhill.